



MODERNIZING a Worship Environment

Paragon 360 led a stage renovation at the 3,000-seat, Cottage Hill Baptist Church, in Mobile, Alabama. Started in 1944 with 28 members, the church had experienced growth that led them to build new sanctuary space in the mid 80s.

The church, now led by Senior Pastor Dr. Alan Floyd, contracted Paragon 360 for some conceptual design work in March 2013 to modernize this worship environment.

“When I became the Pastor at Cottage Hill, the church members asked me if we could start a transition to remodel and update the sanctuary stage if I became their Pastor,” said Pastor Floyd. “The 80s design of our stage included a large concrete choir loft in a semicircular design where no one faced the audience. The stage had acoustical issues, a large pipe organ, and a very traditional design. After changing the worship style and selling the pipe organ, the church draped a large black curtain in front of the choir loft...not a pleasing look. The remodel of this space became one of my first priorities.”

Paragon’s design plan included some very basic cost-effective solutions that minimized demolition and reconstruction.

“The existing, problematic choir loft was going to be cost prohibitive to fix,” stated Donnie Brawner, Paragon 360 CEO. “We came up with a plan to block, hide and essentially wall off the old choir loft areas and then work in front of that space by creating a new background wall. With some minor modifications to the stage design, we were able to accommodate the necessary choir and orchestra members without having to utilize any of the old choir loft space. This design concept alone saved the church hundreds of thousands in demolition of the old, existing choir loft.”

Pastor Floyd said, “We called Paragon partly because I used to be part of the large church roundtable made up of pastors from churches with average attendance of 1,200 weekly. We would meet annually, and pastors would share ideas and thoughts. In talking with pastors at that meeting, I kept hearing that Paragon was the company to go to for older style facilities that were looking to be renovated, whether it be acoustics, audio, lighting or whatever.”

The stage design included a custom built, scenic, wood/slat, illuminated 32’ wall that spanned 48’ across the stage. The wall included doors for backstage access, two changeable graphic boxes, a center video screen, a recessed choir entrance and exit, and an illuminated cross unit at the top. The wall is framed in metal banding work with four 45’ illuminated columns with matching wood treatments.

Paragon utilized its modular staging with matching wood treatments to extend the stage at the corners and center and provide a

modular choir riser system for up to 90 people. The stage extensions and choir risers were surrounded in acrylic glass railings.

Throughout the renovation the church was able to continue holding services in the sanctuary. The new stage space was completed in early January 2014.

“When we had the great reveal of the renovation, amazingly, there was not one person that expressed dislike at all,” stated Pastor Floyd. “In fact, one of our oldest founding members called me on that morning with tears in her eyes and expressed how proud she was and how beautiful she thought it was. The congregation is extremely pleased with the look, the layout and the design of the new space. The thing I am most pleased with is its functionality.”

Paragon’s renovation helps the church connect with God through worship.

“It really created an environment that is more conducive to worship, and we have more flexibility to enhance the worship,” stated Pastor Floyd. “Before, with the older space, the black curtain and some of the things that were remnants of the past, we had much to overcome before we could create a worship atmosphere. Now, we bring our worship with us and we can immediately sense the presence of God.” RPN

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